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UNCLAS SOFIA 001683

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EUR/NCE, SCOTT BRANDON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BULGARIA WANTS TO CONSULT WITH EU BEFORE COMMITTING TO AVIAN FLU PARTNERSHIP

REF: A) STATE 175585

B) STATE 180478

1. (SBU) Pol/Econ Off and Agricultural attache delivered the talking points regarding the International Partnership on Avian Influenza and upcoming Senior Officials meeting to the Ministry of Health and Agriculture Ministry respectively. Dr. Angal Kunchev, the head epidemiologist at MOH, and Radosveta Filipova, the Ministry's chief expert on communicable disease control, were receptive to the idea of Bulgaria's joining the Partnership. However, Filipova said the GOB would have to consult with their representatives in the European Union before Bulgaria could decide on its official position. The GOB would like to compare similar EU initiatives on Avian Flu and identify any differences or conflicts. In light of this, Filipova politely declined the invitation to attend the Senior Officials meeting on October 6 and 7.

2. (SBU) Zheko Baichev, Bulgaria's chief veterinarian responsible for animal health at the Agriculture Ministry, also expressed interest in the Partnership. Baichev commented that Ministry officials would like to review the Partnership documents further and will not be sending a representative to the Senior Officials meeting.

3. (U) Per reftel B Post requests that Department extend invitation to Bulgarian Embassy in Washington.

BEYRLE